ERIC LILLIEBRIDGE

SQUAT CYCLE

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Squat Cycle

✓ On Heavy days, don't wear yourself out on warm ups. After 50% of your max you should be doing singles approaching your top set! Give yourself as much time as you need between sets. There is no set resting time between your sets. You are only working up to 1 top set for max reps on your heavy days.

✓ On Heavy days use a Belt or Knee sleeves/Knee wraps if you wear them. On Light days, no belt, no wraps (knee sleeves are okay!).

✓ For the first week of heavy training, you will need to use your current 1 rep max as the number you will use for your percentages. You're not using your best PR's, you're using your current maxes, what your true strength is at right now. Every heavy week after this (Which is every 2 weeks) I will have you bump the weight up by 10-15lbs on that number you're using for the percentage. It will all depend on how the previous workout goes to determine how much you should increase by. But it will be kept in the 10-15lb range. If you don't reach the goal amount of reps, then you will not increase your training max up at all.

✓ You will alternate your Squats every other week, one week you will go heavy, one week you will go light back and forth until the end of the training cycle. This allows you to MAXIMIZE your strength gains by giving yourself plenty of time (2 weeks) between your heavy Squat workouts. This is IDENTICLE to how I train!

✓ On your heavy Squat weeks, you will Deadlift light, on your light Squat weeks, you will Deadlift heavy.

✓ Accessory Exercises to do after every Squat day- Leg press 5 sets of 15-20 reps, Leg Extensions: 5 sets of 15-20 reps, Standing Calf Raises on a machine (seated is okay too!) 5 sets of 15-20 reps

✓ After week 12, you will test your 1 rep max either in the gym or at a competition. Give yourself 2 full weeks afterwards to recover.

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WEEK ONE

Week 1 - (Heavy Day): Top set - 87% x max reps (Goal 5 reps) ONE TOP SET ONLY FOR MAX REPS!

- ✓ Use belt and knee wraps/knee sleeves if you wear them
- ✓ Increase your training max up by 10-15lbs if you reached the goal amount of reps with your top set* (Do not increase if you missed the goal reps)
- ✓ Do all accessory work after your top set

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Week One Notes :

WEEK TWO

Week 2 - (Light Day): Paused Squats up to 56% x 5 reps for 3 sets, 1 second pause on each rep No belt, no knee wraps (Knee sleeves are okay to wear)

- ✓ All warm up sets are for sets of 5 reps leading up to your top 3 sets of 5
- ✓ Do all accessory work after your top sets

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Week Two Notes :

WEEK THREE

Week 3 - (Heavy Day): Top set - 90% x max reps (Goal 4 reps) ONE TOP SET ONLY FOR MAX REPS!

- ✓ Use belt and knee wraps/knee sleeves if you wear them
- ✓ Increase your training max up by 10-15lbs if you reached the goal amount of reps with your top set (Do not increase if you missed the goal reps)
- ✓ Do all accessory work after your top set

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Week Three Notes

WEEK FOUR

Week 4 - (Light Day): Paused Squats up to 58% x 5 reps for 3 sets, 1 second pause on each rep No belt, no knee wraps (Knee sleeves are okay to wear)

- ✓ All warm up sets are for sets of 5 reps leading up to your top 3 sets of 5
- ✓ Do all accessory work after your top sets

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Week Four Notes :

WEEK FIVE

Week 5 - (Heavy Day): Top set - 92% x max reps (Goal 3 reps) ONE TOP SET ONLY FOR MAX REPS!

- ✓ Use belt and knee wraps/knee sleeves if you wear them
- ✓ Increase your training max up by 10-15lbs if you reached the goal amount of reps with your top set* (Do not increase if you missed the goal reps)
- ✓ Do all accessory work after your top set

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Week Five Notes :

WEEK SIX

Week 6 - (Light Day): Paused Squats up to 60% x 5 reps for 3 sets, 1 second pause on each rep No belt, no knee wraps (Knee sleeves are okay to wear)

- ✓ All warm up sets are for sets of 5 reps leading up to your top 3 sets of 5
- ✓ Do all accessory work after your top sets

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Week Six Notes :

WEEK SEVEN

Week 7 - (Heavy Day): Top set - 94% x max reps (Goal 2 reps)
ONE TOP SET ONLY FOR MAX REPS!

- ✓ Use belt and knee wraps/knee sleeves if you wear them
- ✓ Increase your training max up by 10-15lbs if you reached the goal amount of reps with your top set* (Do not increase if you missed the goal reps)
- ✓ Do all accessory work after your top set

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Week Seven Notes :

WEEK EIGHT

Week 8 - (Light Day): Paused Squats up to 62% x 5 reps for 3 sets, 1 second pause on each rep. **No belt, no knee wraps (Knee sleeves are okay to wear)**

- ✓ All warm up sets are for sets of 5 reps leading up to your top 3 sets of 5
- ✓ Do all accessory work after your top set

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Week Eight Notes :

WEEK NINE

Week 9 - (Heavy Day): Top set- 96% x 1 x 2 sets (2 sets of 1 rep)

- ✓ Use belt and knee wraps/knee sleeves if you wear them
- ✓ You can increase your training max up by 10-15lbs here if you are able to achieve both sets of 1 rep with more left in the tank. This is your last day to increase your training max up
- ✓ Do all accessory work after your top set

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Week Nine Notes :

WEEK TEN

Week 10 - (Light Day): Paused Squats up to 64% x 5 reps for 3 sets, 1 second pause on each rep **No belt, no knee wraps (Knee sleeves are okay to wear)**

- ✓ All warm up sets are for sets of 5 reps leading up to your top 3 sets of 5
- ✓ Do all accessory work after your top sets

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Week Ten Notes :

WEEK ELEVEN

Week 11 - (Heavy Day): Top set - 98% x 1 rep (Only 1 rep at your top set)

- ✓ Use belt and knee wraps/knee sleeves if you wear them
- ✓ Do all accessory work after your top set

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Week Eleven Notes :

WEEK TWELVE

Week 12 - (Light Day): Paused Squats up to 66% x 5 reps for 3 sets
No belt, no knee wraps (Knee sleeves are okay to wear)

- ✓ All warm up sets are for sets of 5 reps leading up to your top 3 sets of 5
- ✓ Do all accessory work after your top sets

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Week Twelve Notes :

Additonal Guidance

If you are planning on competing, you will need to add in 2 extra weeks after week 12. You will need a week 13 and week 14 to de load and rest properly before you compete. You will need to back track 14 weeks out from your competition and that's when you would get started on week 1. Week 13 is a de load week, working up to planned openers for 1 rep to get a feel for it. Week 14 is a full rest week leading up to your meet, no training at all.

If you are interested in doing this program exactly how I do it for myself, this is my training routine/split for the week, every week

- **Monday**: Rest
- **Tuesday**: Extra Accessory work day
- **Wednesday**: Rest
- **Thursday**: Bench + Bench Accessory work
- **Friday**: Rest
- **Saturday**: Rest
- **Sunday**: Squats & Deadlifts + All Squat/Deadlift Accessory work

You can split up the Squat & Deadlift days into separate days if you want. I personally have always preferred to train them together in the same training session and have made the best gains and progress doing so.

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Bar Placement

It's important to understand that everyone's bar placement is going to be different. What it really comes down to is what feels best for you. I started out as a high bar squatter for 10+ years and switched over to low bar. For a high bar position, you want the bar to sit directly on top of your traps. That is what makes a high bar position, a true high bar position. With high bar, you're going to be more quad dominant during the lift. With a low bar position, it can be anywhere below your traps. Some people can get away with having the bar very low almost on their shoulder blades, but that takes a lot of flexibility. The best position for low bar is to let the bar sit right below your trap line but right on top of your rear delts.

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Bar Placement

With a low bar position, you're going to be more dominant in your hips, glutes and hamstrings because it changes your leverages just by simply moving the bar lower. Most people can squat a lot more with a low bar position simply because of that reason, better leverages and puts you in a better position to handle heavier weights. The weight is displaced more across your upper back vs high bar and you're getting more muscle groups working harder during the lift. Whichever one you think fits you best, I highly advise all high bar squatters to at least try low bar once and practice with it to see if it might be better for you.

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HAND PLACEMENT

Hand placement can vary between the lifter. The one thing I've noticed with hand placement is most lifters that have bad mobility in their shoulders tend to have their hands further out on the bar. The guys with better mobility can get their hands in closer. But as always, you should always go with what feels best for you. I personally think the closer you can get your hands in, the better. Simply because it will give you a lot of upper back tightness which is very crucial for heavy squats. The guys that have their hands all the way out to the end of the bar, tend to have issues with rounding forward due to the lack of upper back tightness. If you are one of these guys, I would highly recommend getting work done on your shoulders to help with mobility. Some guys like to use a full grip on the bar, some guys like to use a thumb less grip, and some guys like to only have 2 or 3 fingers around the bar. I've found that using a full grip has worked a lot better for me and I feel a lot safer and better control using a full grip vs a thumb less grip. Wearing wrist wraps is going to help those guys that use a closer hand placement and especially the guys that go low bar. It helps take a lot of pressure off your wrists and overall just makes it feel a lot better.

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Stance

Finding the right stance can be tricky for a lot of people. For myself, I've changed my stance around so many times, I've lost count by now. The main reason for this is that as I got bigger and gained more weight, I felt like I needed to open up my stance to hit depth better. It was a slow process gradually moving my stance out every so often to help build up my hip strength. If you use a fairly narrow stance, trying to go right to a wide stance is probably going to feel awkward and might cause some pain and discomfort in your hips. The best stance to start with is a shoulder width stance. From there you should go by feel and see if going with a closer stance feels better, or if widening up your stance feels better for you. At first, a wide stance didn't feel right for me, but as time went on and I kept practicing, it started to feel better and better. Now I'm a few inches outside of a shoulder width stance on both legs. You have to be open to trying to new things and always trying to better yourself. If you're stuck on using one stance and never changing, you never know where your lift could actually be if you tried to perfect it and make it better for yourself.

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LIFTING BELTS/POSITIONNG

When it comes to lifting belts, there's only a few different variations to choose from. You're looking at either a prong belt, or a lever belt. 10mm in thickness or 13mm in thickness. Those are your basic options to choose from. For myself, I started out using a prong belt for squats and eventually switched over to using a lever belt (13mm). I feel like the lever belts offer a lot more support and they're also much easier to put on after you've just got done possibly wrapping your own knees and putting wrist wraps on. It's also much easier to get your preferred tightness because you can move the lever piece forward or backwards to make the belt fit looser or tighter. For positioning, this will vary between lifters. I have always preferred to put the belt up higher because I didn't feel like it gave me much support when I would wear it lower. Having the belt up higher helps create a lot of upper abdominal pressure and can also help your back stay more erect during the lift having that pressure to push against. If you are one of those guys that likes to wear it lower, I would highly recommend just giving this a try to see how it feels for you. Try moving your belt up above your naval. The bottom of your belt should be just above your naval to start with. I wear my belt about an inch or so above my naval, any higher I feel like it hurts my breathing and I can't get in a big enough air. You have to play around with it to find your sweet spot. You should notice a big difference right away with the amount of pressure it creates up top for you. You'd be surprised how much just moving the belt up can help. This may not work for everyone, but you never know until you try.

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Knee Wraps

Lastly, a very important one that many lifters are clueless about. How to wrap your knees properly. The “standard” length for knee wraps is 2.5 meters. Very few federations only allow 2 meter wraps, for the most part the majority of federations allow 2.5 meter wraps. The type of wrap you should use is all depending on you. Whether you like having a stretchy wrap that gives good rebound, or having a stiff wrap that gives you stopping power. It all comes down to what you prefer and what feels best for you. There’s so many different types of knee wraps out there, until you’ve experimented with a variety of different pairs, you’ll never know what is best for you. When it comes to wrapping your knees, you should make sure that both wraps are identical. Many times I see lifters have wraps on and both wraps look completely different. The pattern of the wrap looks different and where the end of the wrap gets tied off is different. This should NEVER happen. Having one wrap tighter than the other or having one wrap spaced out differently can completely throw off your form and technique. If you wrap your knees yourself, it should be fairly easy for you to catch on with how to wrap both of your knees identical. If you always have someone wrap your knees, then your knee wrapper needs more practice on how to make both wraps exactly the same. For myself, I like to start the knee wrap up top, about 2 inches above my knee cap. The wrap is being wrapped outwards, away from my body. This helps force your knees out at the bottom. I typically will go down 4 revolutions, overlapping each one by half. So after the first revolution, the next one goes over the first one but only covering half of the wrap. I follow this pattern down 4 revolutions and then I make an “X” around the knee to help secure the wrap.

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Knee Wraps

(continued...)

The “X” helps to offer support from top to bottom, side to side and also helps prevent your first set of revolutions from opening up during the lift and coming loose. After the “X” has been placed around the 4 revolutions, I finish off the wrap around my knee cap with 1-2 more revolutions depending on if it’s a warm up set or a top set. The wraps gradually get tighter as I approach my top set. They’re never wrapped with the exact same tightness. Always start out with a loose wrap and gradually make them tighter on your warm up sets approaching your top set.

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